



KANTHA- A Folk Embroidery Of Bengal

(specialty of Bolpur/Shantiniketan.)

Any garment or cloth with kantha embroidery (which forms or outlines decorative motifs with running stitch) is a kantha garment.....

A *kantha* is rich multicolored embroidery from West Bengal. It is done with simple running stitches. Rural women in Bengal typically use discarded saris, dhotis and cloth and layer them with stitches to make a quilt, light blanket shawls, throws or bedspread.

Kantha shows the folk expression of the embroidery's art. General motifs used in kantha embroidery are human figures, animal, floral symbols which cover the surface from the corners, and tree of life that reaches out towards the center, the center design was usually a lotus. Different patterns like birds, fishes, kalka, mandala, mythological stories are also figured.

Fabric on which the *kantha* is done are usually muted as the old fabrics are already underwent various washings. The threads used for embroidery were usually drawn from the colorful borders of the discarded saris mainly White, red, green, yellow, black and blues in colour. Cotton threads are usually used for embroidery. The stitches used in kantha embroidery are: running, darning, satin and loop. Stem stitch is also used to outline the figures.

There are seven different types of kantha:

Archilata kantha



Archilata kantha are small, rectangular covers for mirrors or toilet accessories with wide, colorful borders in assorted motifs.

Baiton kantha

Baiton Kantha are square wraps used for covering books and other valuables. They are elaborately patterned with borders of several rows of colorful designs.



Durjani/thalia

Durjani/thalia kantha are small rectangles with a central lotus design and embroidered borders. Three corners of the rectangle are folded inward to form a wallet.



Lep kantha

Lep kantha are rectangular wraps heavily padded to make warm coverlets. The entire piece would be stitched in wavy, rippled designs over which simple embroidery was executed.

Oaar kantha

Oaar kantha are rectangular pillow covers in simple designs with a decorative border sewn around the edges.

Sujani kantha

Sujani kantha are rectangular pieces of decorative cloth used as blankets or spreads on ceremonial occasions.



Rumal kantha

Rumal kantha are used as absorbent wipes or plate coverings. They also feature a central lotus with ornamented borders.

Kantha on Modern wear

Kantha is currently very popular with tourists visiting Bengal. These days the *kantha* embroidery is used to adorn fresh new sarees and fabric, instead of old rags. *kantha* goods—varying from saris to salwar-kameez, lehengas to scarves and blouses and utility items such as bedcovers, furnishing fabrics—are sold from several outlets. Kantha is one of the favorites of Indian designers. This art is not only confined to India but also getting international exposures through Indian designers' outlets. Tarun Tahiliani, a well known designer from India has opened several outlets of his kantha garments in London, Paris, Santa Fe and Washington.

-http://www.gurusadaymuseum.org/col_textiles.html

-spectrum, the tribune 22nd march 2009